

SPOTLIGHT | NEW BRUNSWICK

I Do, Hungarian Style

By Tammy La Gorce

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THE two shows on March 19 in New Brunswick by the local Hungarian musical ensemble Eletfa Folk Band and its companion dance troupe, the Csurdongolo Folk Ensemble, are called “There Is a Wedding on Our Street.”

But “there won’t be any bouquet toss, no wedding cake,” said Ildiko Hajdu-Nemeth née Magyar, Eletfa’s musical director and lead violinist.

Instead, the wedding onstage at the Crossroads Theater will be distinctly Hungarian and “timeless,” she said “something like the feeling you would have had at my wedding in New Brunswick in 2003, but also a little bit of what would have happened at a wedding in Hungary 100 years ago.”

That includes vibrant costumes that will change to reflect different regions, and music that Ms. Hajdu-Nemeth née Magyar described as “similar to American folk music, feeling-wise, but with a lot of guttural sounds and strings.”

The seven-member Eletfa was founded in Teaneck in 1987 by Ms. Hajdu-Nemeth née Magyar, 39, and her brother, Kalman Magyar Jr., of Toronto, with the support of their parents, Kalman and Judith Magyar, of Somerset. (The bassist, Attila

Papp, of Hawthorne, was also a founding member.) The family, and the band, later moved to New Brunswick. The 20-member Csurdongolo was founded in New Brunswick in 1998.

“New Brunswick is a hub for the Hungarian community in the U.S., and we’re all mostly friends and family,” explained Ms. Hajdu-Nemeth née Magyar. (Her husband, Laszlo Hajdu-Nemeth, is artistic director of Csurdongolo and plays the kontra, a three-string viola, for Eletfa.) That does not mean there is anything amateurish about the band and dance troupe, though.

Eletfa, which means “tree of life,” has played at Lincoln Center with the New York Philharmonic and at New York venues including Town Hall and the Knitting Factory. Csurdongolo also tours and regularly works with instructors from visiting professional Hungarian dance groups.

Joining both groups for the Crossroads Theater shows will be members of the Hungarian American Athletic Club Children’s Folk Dance Group, also based in New Brunswick, and the Berkenye Children’s Folk Dance Ensemble of Passaic.

“Everyone in the area is aware of the Hungarian community presence, and they’re very supportive,” said Ms. Hajdu-Nemeth née Magyar. “When there’s something arts related to see that’s Hungarian, people really turn out.”

TAMMY LA GORCE

“There Is a Wedding on Our Street” will be performed at 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. March 19 at the Crossroads Theater, 7 Livingston Avenue, New Brunswick. Tickets, \$20, may be purchased at (732) 930-1038 or csurfolktickets@gmail.com. For more information: eletfa.org and csurdongolo.org.

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